# **How to setup DFS on Windows Server 2019**

In this post, I will show you how to install and configure DFS (Distributed File System) on Windows Server 2019.

Microsoft introduced DFS as an add-on to Windows NT 4.0, and DFS has been included as a free subsystem in all versions of Windows since Windows 2000. DFS consists of a server component, included in all versions of Windows Server, and a client component, included in all versions of Windows.

DFS works with the Server Message Block (SMB) protocol, sometimes referred to as Windows networking. The SMB protocol is also commonly referred to as the Common Internet File System (CIFS). Microsoft's DFS does not work with non-SMB file networking protocols such as NFS or HDFS.

With DFS, the storage administrator creates a hierarchical namespace of links that point to his company's file shares. These shares can be hosted by any SMB-compatible device, including Windows Servers, network-attached storage devices from numerous vendors, and even Samba shares. The organization of the DFS namespace can be whatever makes sense for the company. For example, shares can be grouped by business unit, by geographic location, or both. A well-designed DFS namespace makes it much easier for users to find shares in the company's networked infrastructure.

DFS stands for Distributed File System, and it provides the ability to consolidate multiple shares on different servers into a common namespace. Whether or not there are multiple locations providing easy access to that data is something that we and IT are charged with. If we can provide easy access, one that consolidates the different locations where data can exist under a single store in a single path, that makes things a lot easier for our users, which in turn makes it easier for us as admins. It is attempting to resolve both of these situations that is the reason why DFS exist and indeed has existed for a number of OS versions.



Host Name - DC.RAMLAN.CA IP Address - 192.168.0.2 Roles - ADDS, DNS, DHCP, DFS



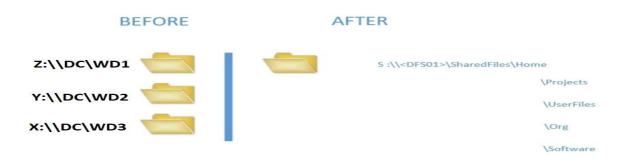


Host Name - OOS.RAMLAN.CA IP Address - 192.168.0.6 Roles - DFS Server



Host Name - WIN10.RAMLAN.CA IP Address - Auto Roles - Client Operating System

DFS NAMESPACE



Well, imagine you were to move the software data or any other share to a new file server. You're going to have to update all the user drive mappings to redirect them to the new server share. Now this might be a simple case of updating a logon script, but what about all those users that have mapped it manually. You're going to have to let them know that you've made this change and then you'll have to go through the process of fixing it, and explain to them why this IT change broke their share access. If you take a look at the right side, DFS will allow us to simplify this by presenting a common namespace to the users, whilst in the background transparently redirecting them to the various share locations. So, we can update these locations in the background without affecting the UNC path. So, for a standalone DFS namespace it would look something like this. We would have the server name (OOS), we would have the DFS namespace name(Shared Files), and then we would have subfolders representing project Organization, Home, User Files, and Software, etc. So now we've got a single drive mapping, in this case S, which is mapping to all these shares in the background, and as I say, if you wanted to redirect or move those shares, then you can do that using the DFS namespace without having to go through and update all the user client drive mappings.

Now, if we were doing this using a Domain DFS namespace, then instead of using the server, OOS, as the server name, you actually use the Active Directory domain name, and like before, the user will see the shares presented as subfolders.

## **STANDALONE VS DOMAIN NAMESPACE**

The key difference is the referral server and where the DFS information is stored. On a standalone DFS implementation, the referral information is stored locally on the single DFS referral server that you choose when you configured DFS. Now this type of configuration is useful if you don't have an Active Directory domain or if for some reason you don't want to integrate with Active Directory, but the downside is that you can only have a single referral server, and if that server is offline then you're not going to be able to access the DFS namespace. The more common and generally preferred approach is to use Domain DFS. In Domain DFS you can have multiple DFS namespace referral servers, perhaps spread out amongst your core sites, and we use Active Directory to direct the clients to the closest referral server.

## **DFS Replication**

DFSR is the component of DFS that allows you to duplicate the DFS data and replicate copies of that data across multiple locations. DFSR enables you to take file data and keep the data synchronized across two or more locations, and that's an important differentiation from BranchCache as BranchCache maintains a single master copy with only a local read-only cache. When you have multiple copies of the same data, there are inherent risks from people updating that data in multiple locations at the same time. Therefore, before setting up DFSR, ask yourself, will people, or maybe processes, be likely to be updating the files simultaneously in multiple locations? If this is expected to happen a lot, then DFSR may cause you issues and you may want to consider using BranchCache or perhaps just keeping a single copy of the data.

DFSR is very powerful, and it enables you to create really any type of replication topology that you can think of, and a useful feature of any replication mechanism is the ability to schedule and throttle the replication. If your WAN link is constrained, then you can protect it by only enabling replication in the evenings. Anytime you're going about replicating content from two different locations, there's always the chance that those two locations could get manipulated or changed at the same time. And so, for that reason, it can be important for us to configure staging or essentially a temporary location where data goes before it ends up replication from one site to the other. And finally, it also supports remote differential compression. This enables it to officially replicate only the changes to files, and not have to replicate the whole file itself when perhaps only a few bytes of data have changed. We will see how this works a little bit later.

#### **DFSR Topologies**

One – to – One Replication –> This is where data is synchronized between two servers. This is an easy to understand topology, and relatively easy to troubleshoot, and it's good if you have two main locations dispersed over a WAN link.

One – to – Many Replication –> This is useful if you have a main central site and you want your branch sites to have local copies of the data. A great use case for this could be a software distribution share or maybe you have read-only reference information that you want to make available to your branch users. It's worth highlighting that the shares on DFS within your branch sites or even your central site, can be made read-only, and the standard NTFS file permissions apply.

Many – to – One Replication –> This, as the name suggests, is where multiple sites all replicate their data into a central location. So where might this be used? Well, it could be used for backup, where you have all the data replicated from your branch site, replicated into a single central site, and we have the backup software running on that central site.

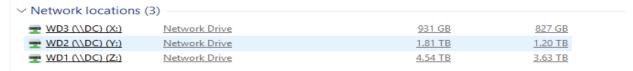
**Hub – Spoke Replication** –> this is similar to many-to-one replication, however, it's bidirectional. This means that there would be two replication hubs between the branch sites because the branch sites would need to send data to the central site, and then the central site would replicate it out to the other branch sites.

**Full Mesh** —> full mesh is where any server can potentially replicate with any other server. Now this can speed up the replication of changes, as there is a direct connection between sites, but it can also cause excessive replication, and it can also be very complicated to troubleshoot.

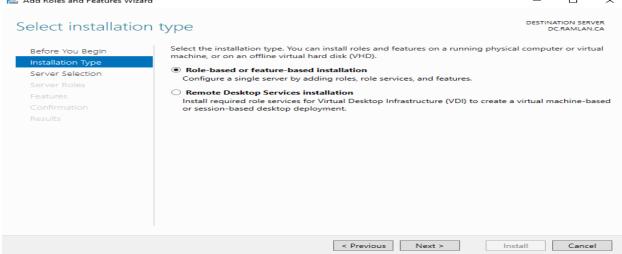
So, as you can see, you can configure replication pretty much as you wish, and as a rule of thumb I'd recommend aligning your replication topology to match your underlying physical network topology.

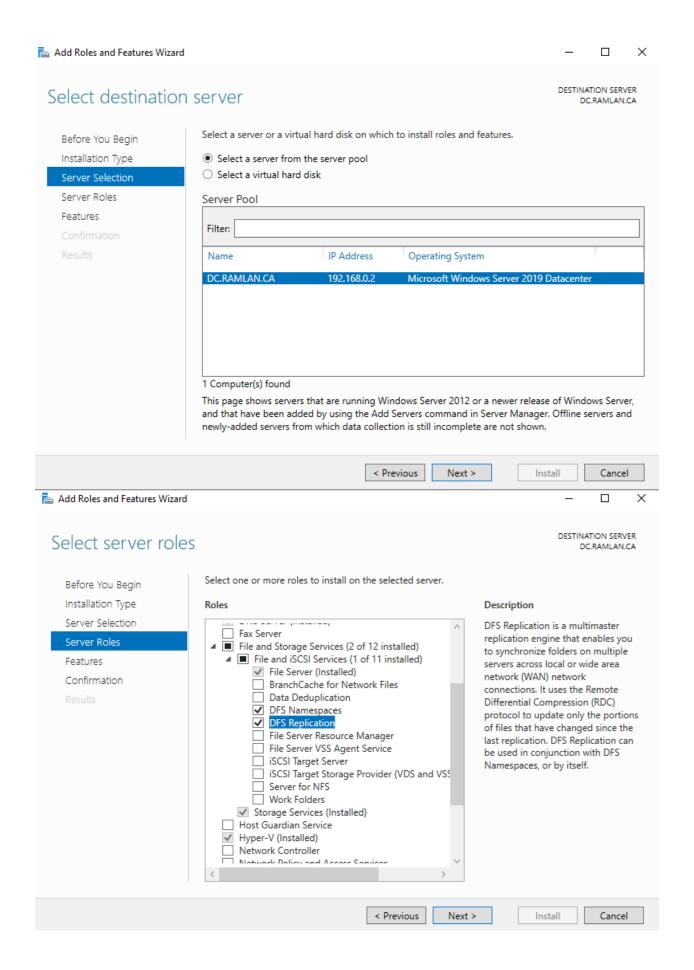
#### INSTALL AND CONFIGURE DFS NAMESPACE (DOMAIN-BASED NAMESPACE):

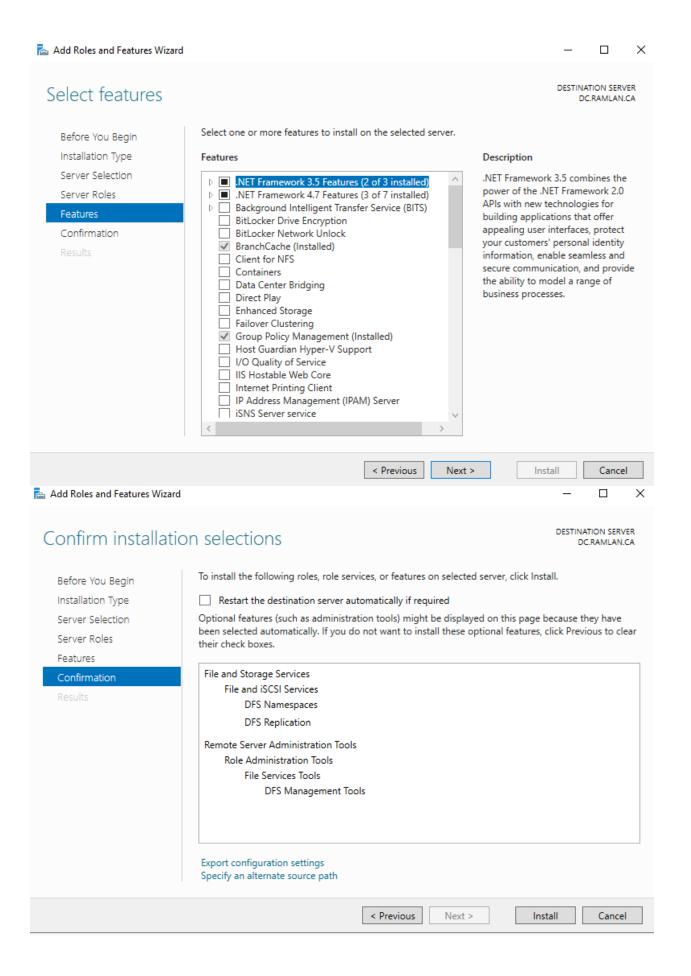
I will be using 2 servers (DC & OOS) for DFS setup. As of now files/folders are shared on DC and, I have 3 external hard drives connected to DC. Here is the screen shot.

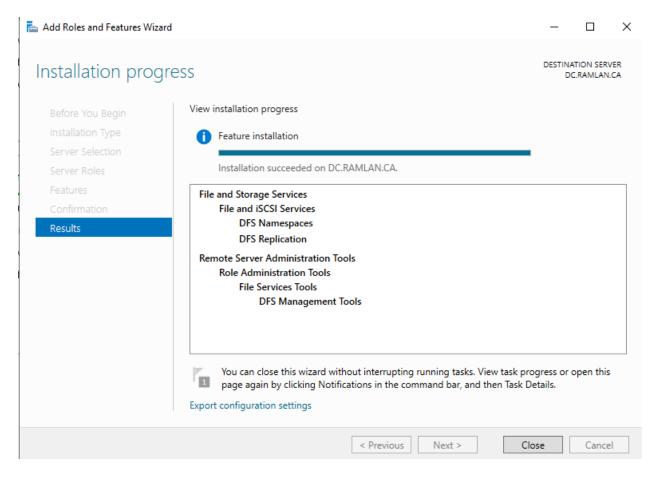


I am going to install DFS roles on both the servers. Open Server Manager – Add Roles and Features

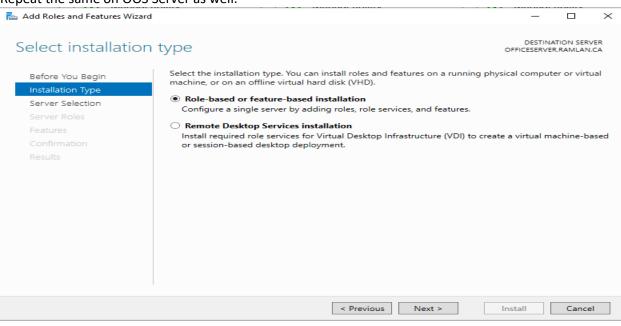


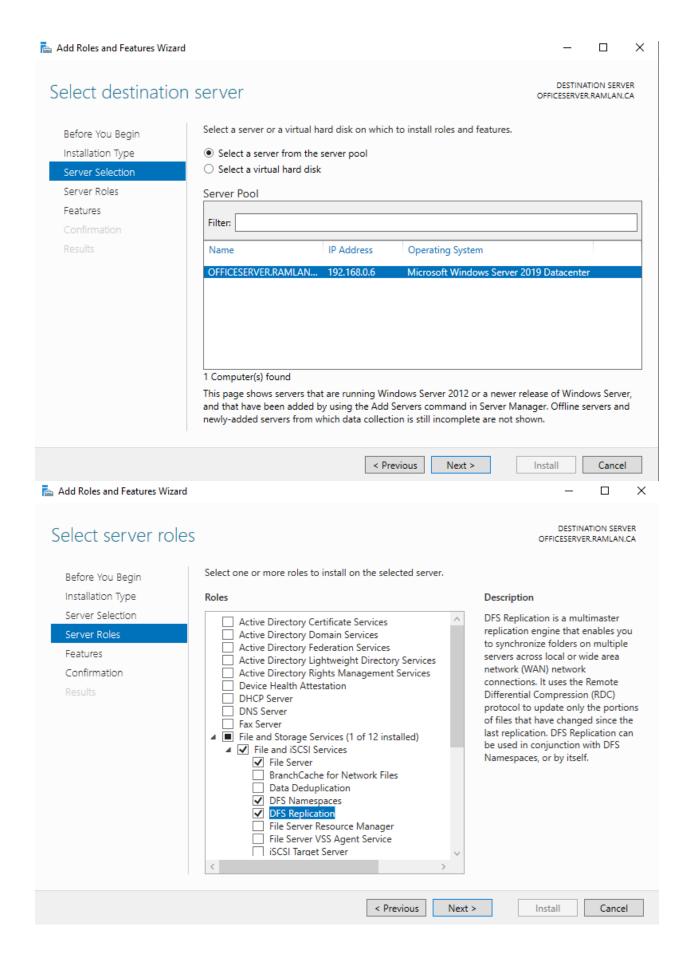


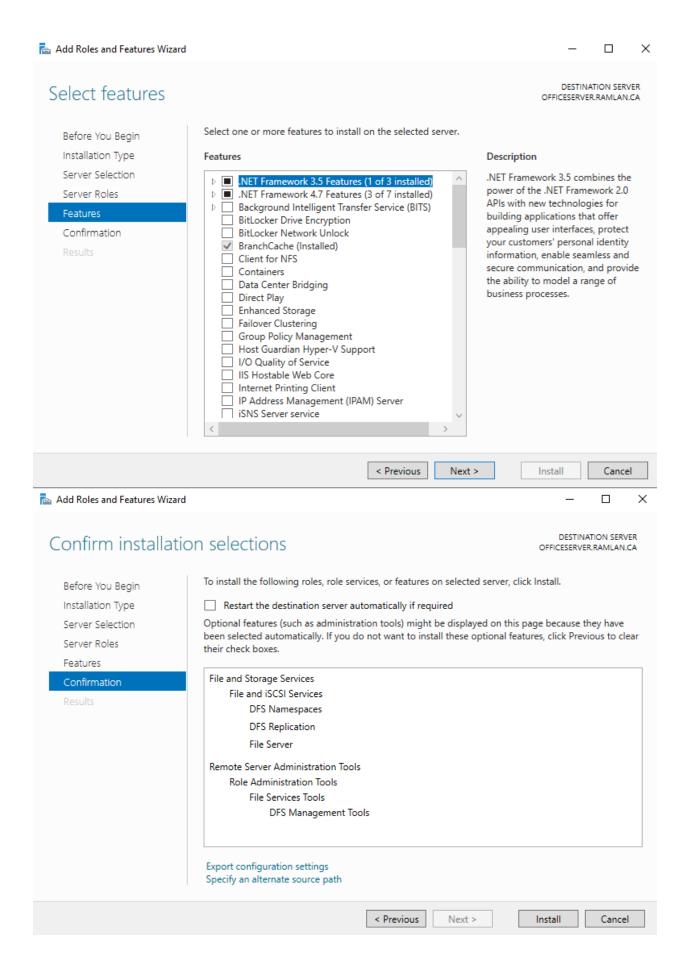


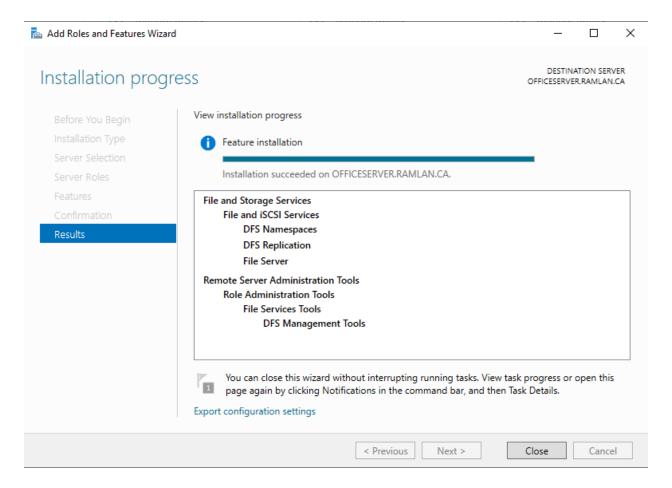


#### Repeat the same on OOS Server as well.

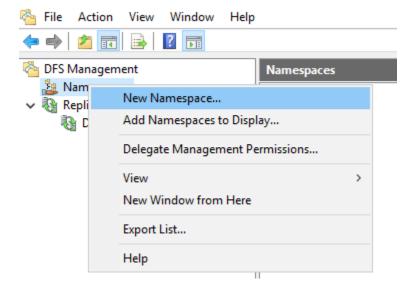


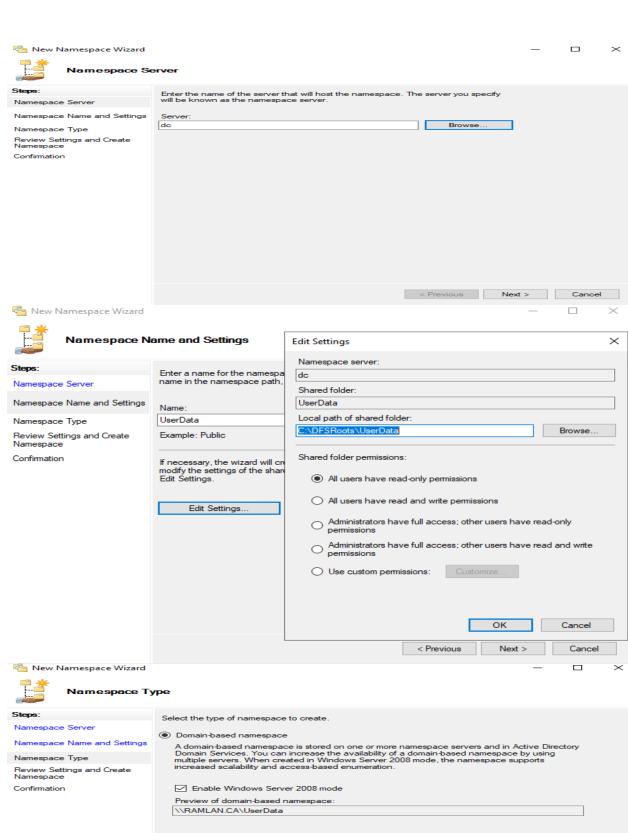


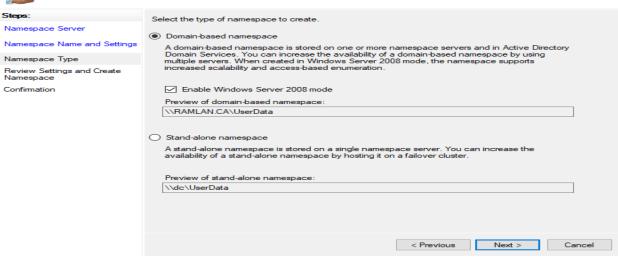


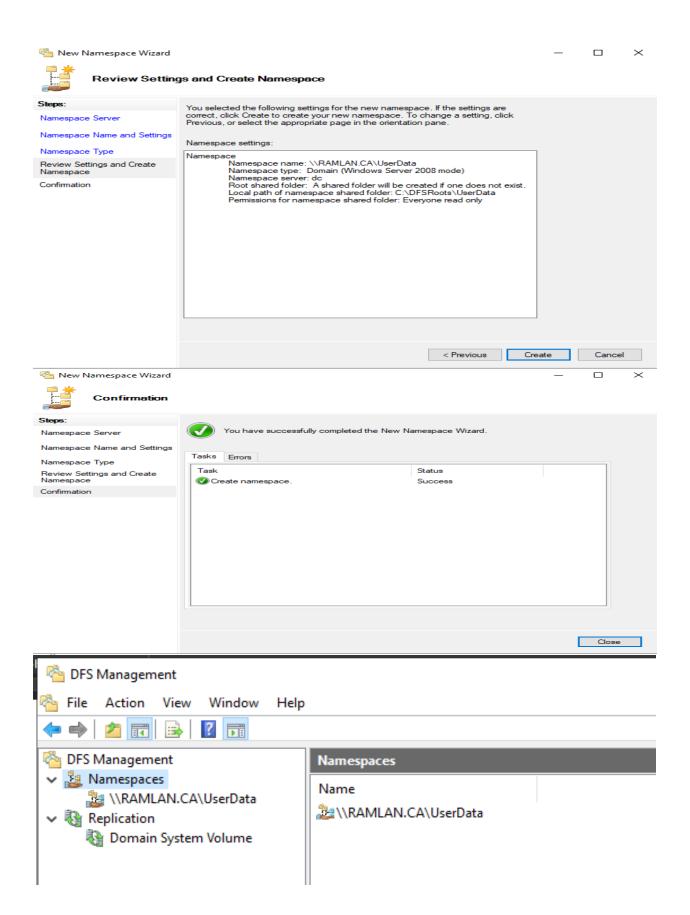


Now we can start our configuration. It will be on DC.

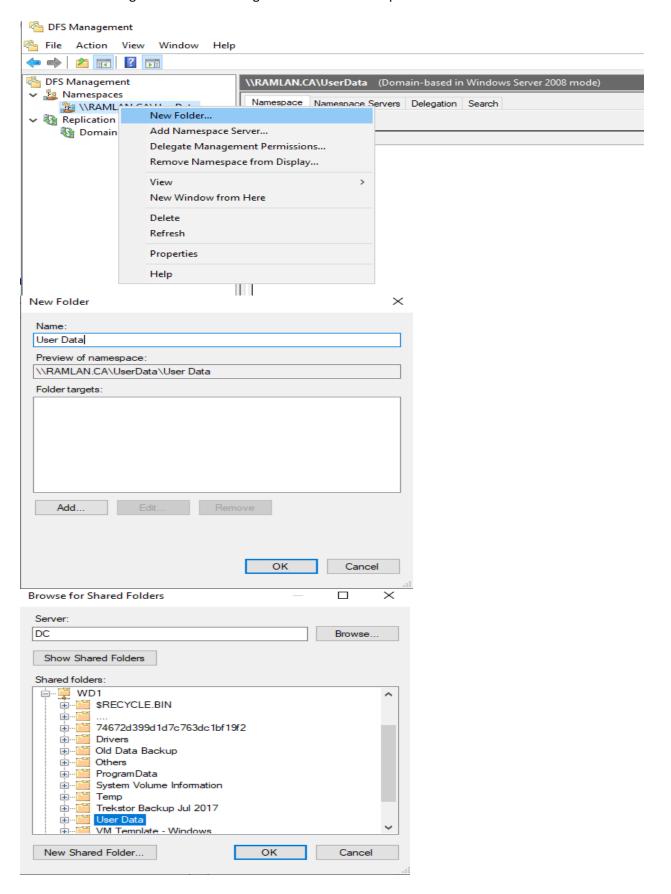


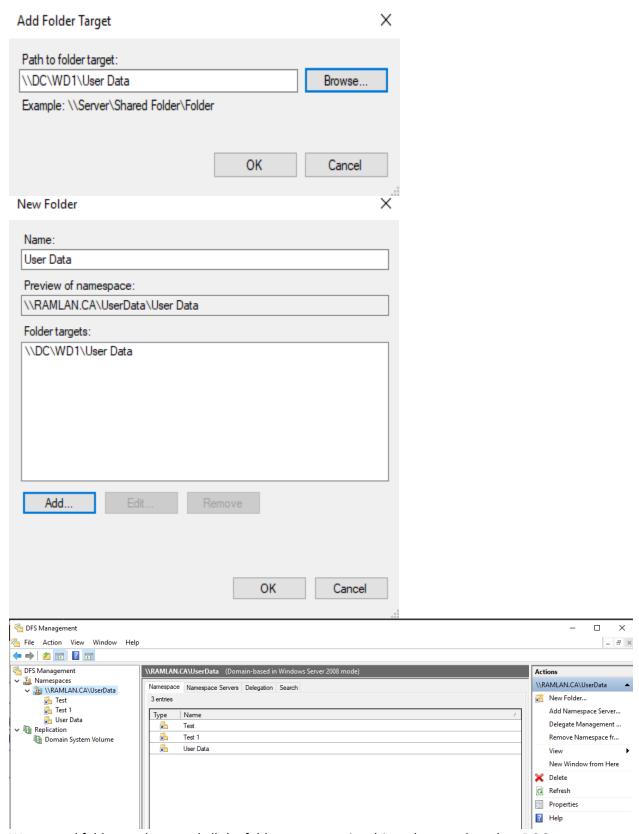






Let's add some target folders to this. Right-Click on the namespace and select New Folder

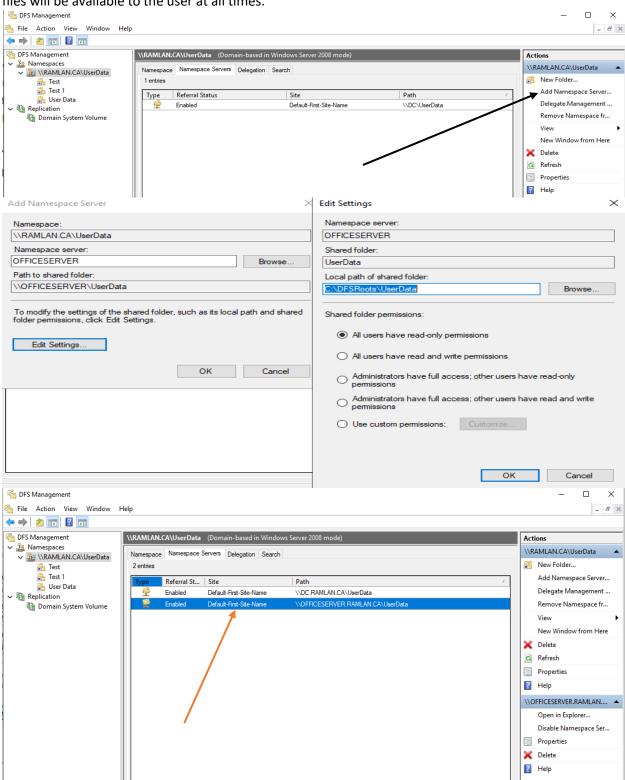




We created folders and mapped all the folders to respective drives that are shared on DC Server.

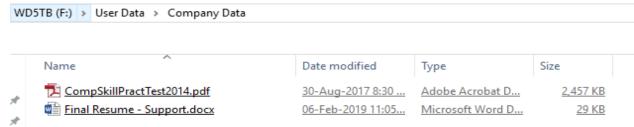
#### **CONFIGURE NAMESPACE REFERRAL SERVER:**

Now we will add our second DFS Server (OOS) so, if there is any issue with DC the shared folders and files will be available to the user at all times.

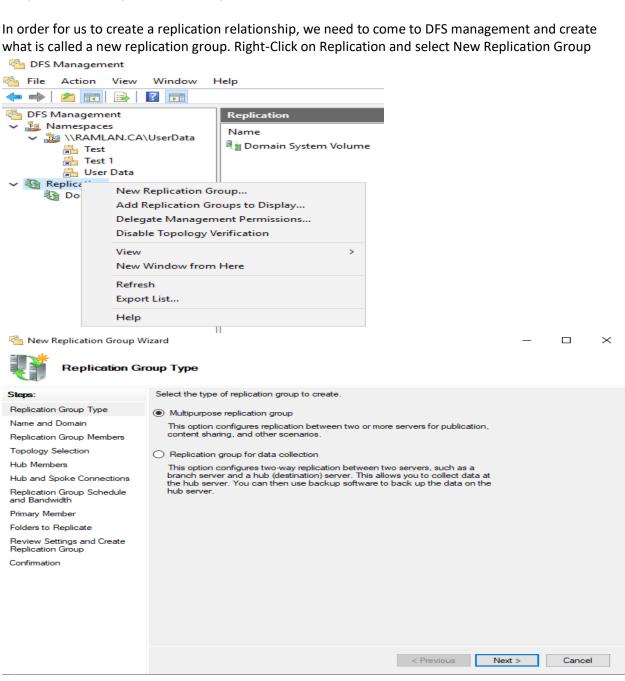


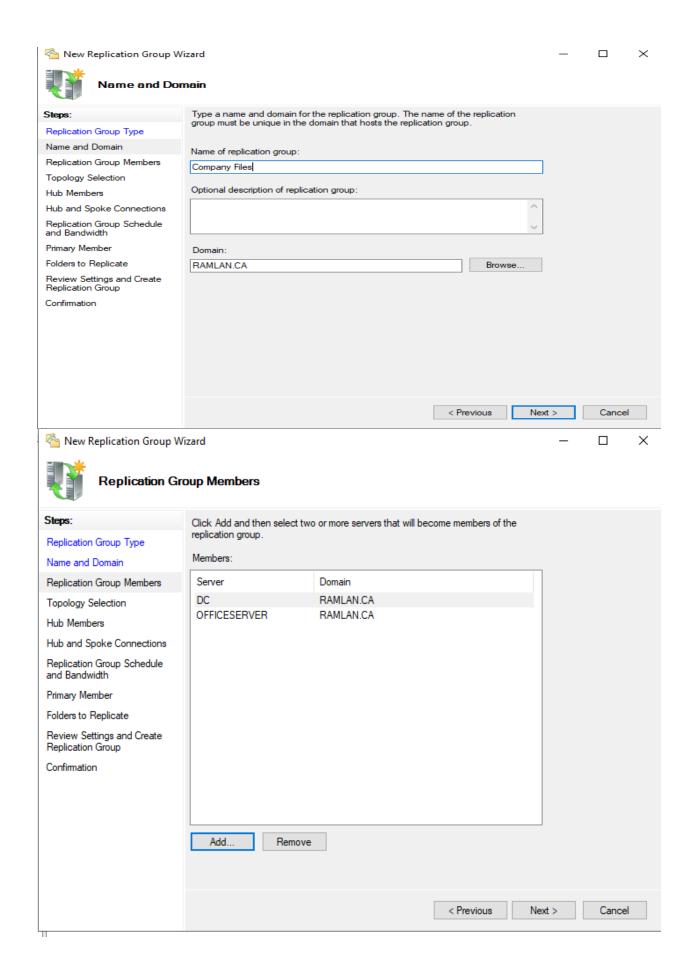
You will notice in the middle it's actually telling us what Active Directory site this server is in as well. DFS is Active Directory site aware, which basically means that if you have folder targets in different sites, then it's going to try and allocate the client to the closest folder target based on the client site.

On DC Server, I created a new folder called Company Files and inside I have few pdf files.

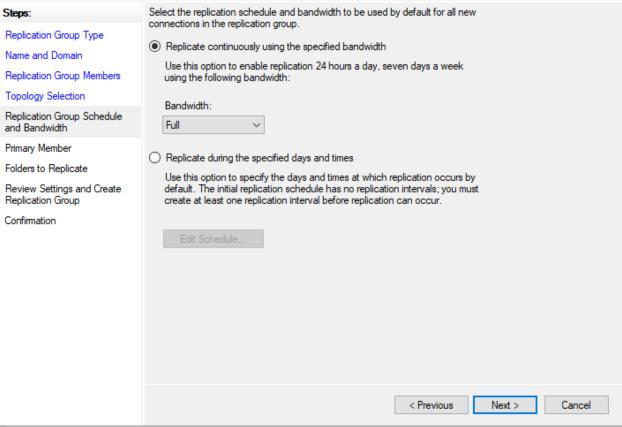


I have another machine here called OOS which, I will use for DFS Replication. OOS is just another computer here in my Active Directory domain.





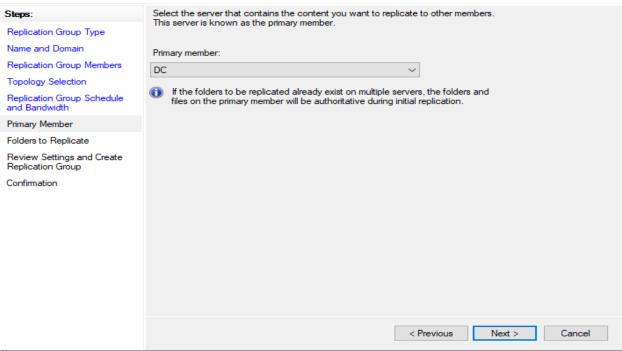




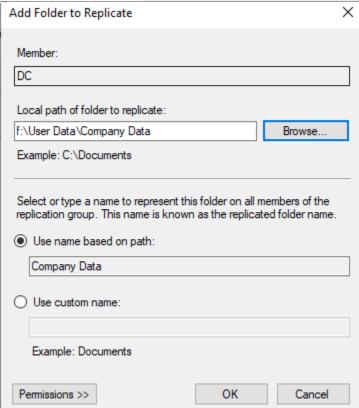




## **Primary Member**



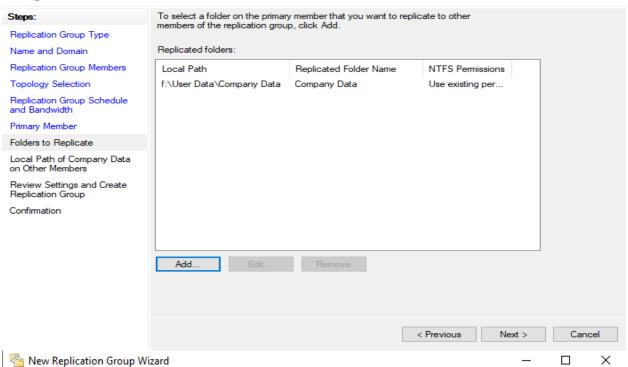
 $\times$ 







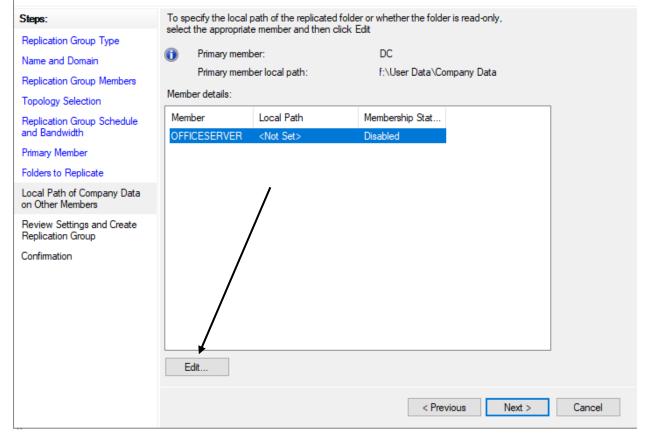
#### Folders to Replicate

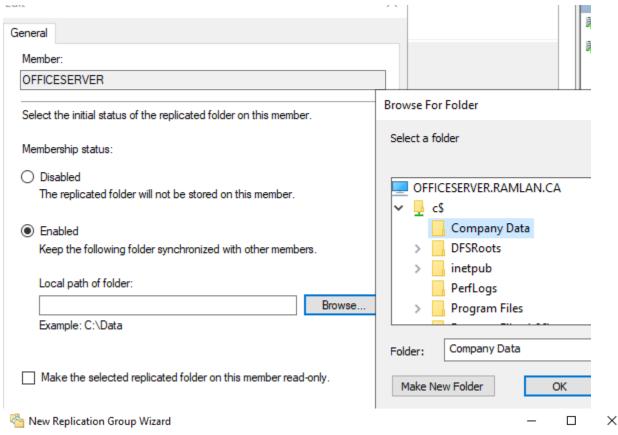


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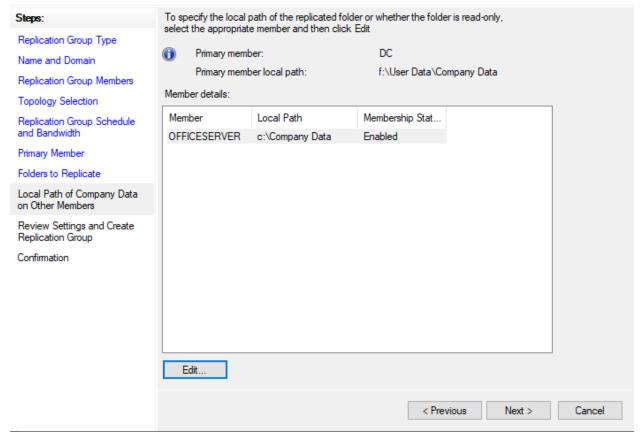
## **Local Path of Company Data on Other Members**





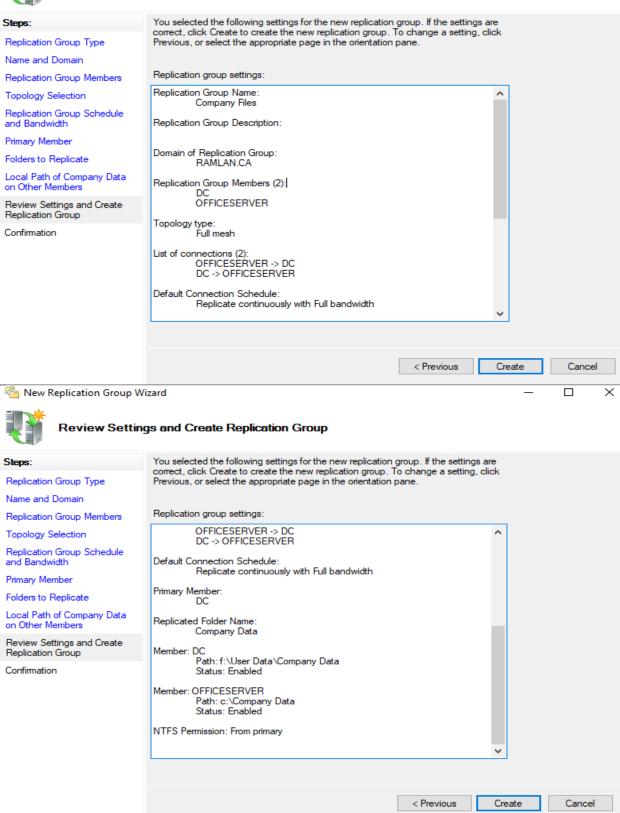


## Local Path of Company Data on Other Members





#### Review Settings and Create Replication Group

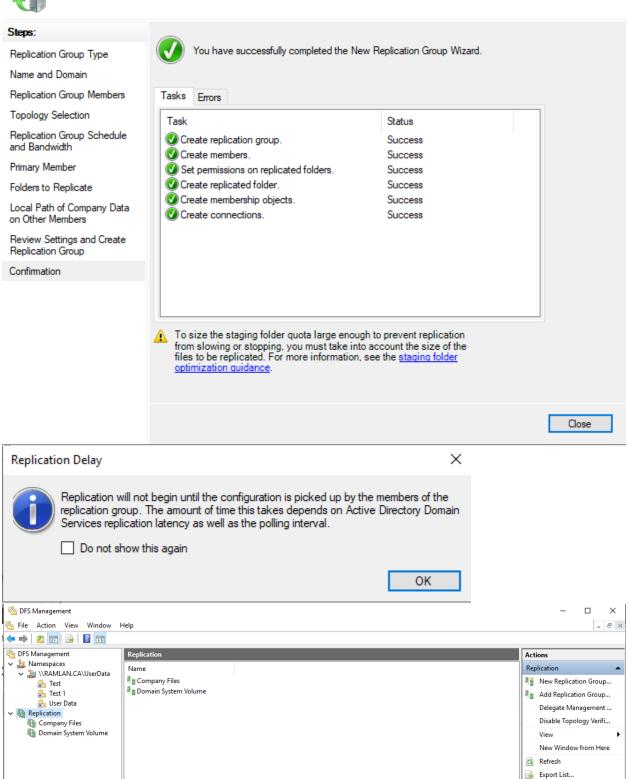


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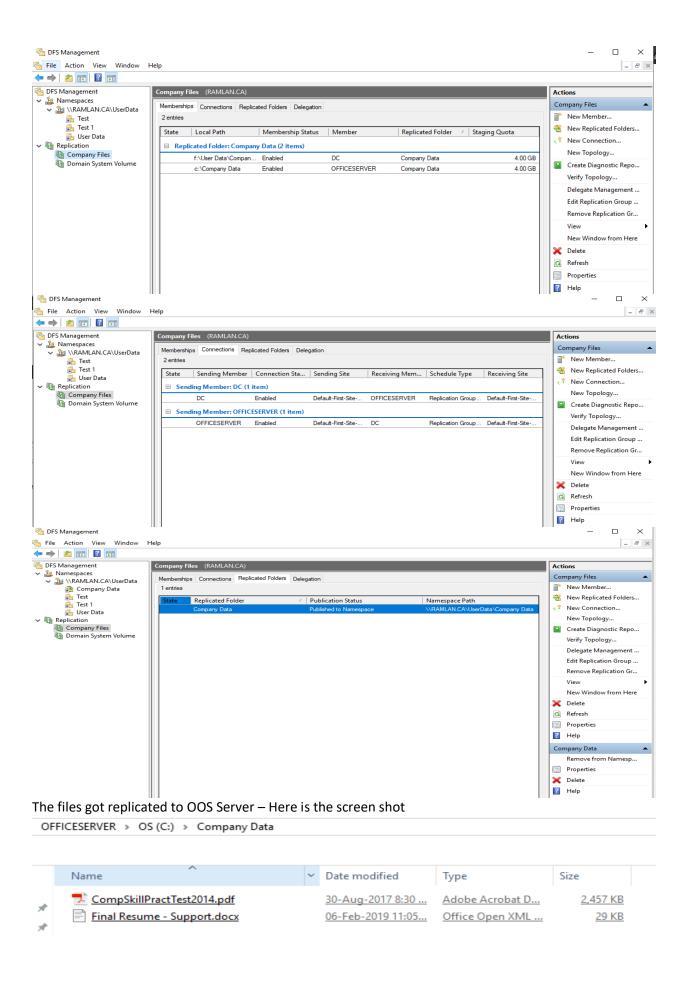


#### Confirmation



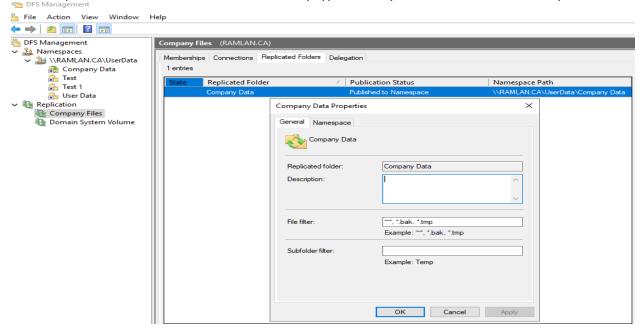
? Help

X

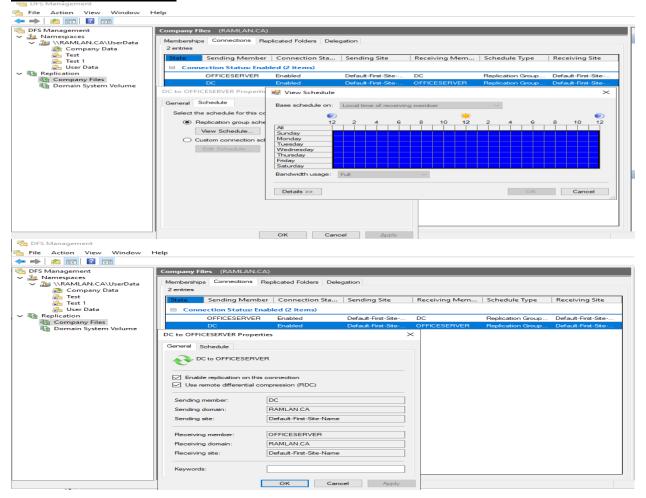


#### **CONFIGURE FILE FILTERS:**

In File filter you can see default files .bak,.tmp extension of files. This means that these types of files will not be replicated. You can use filter to exclude any type of files you want to exclude from replication.



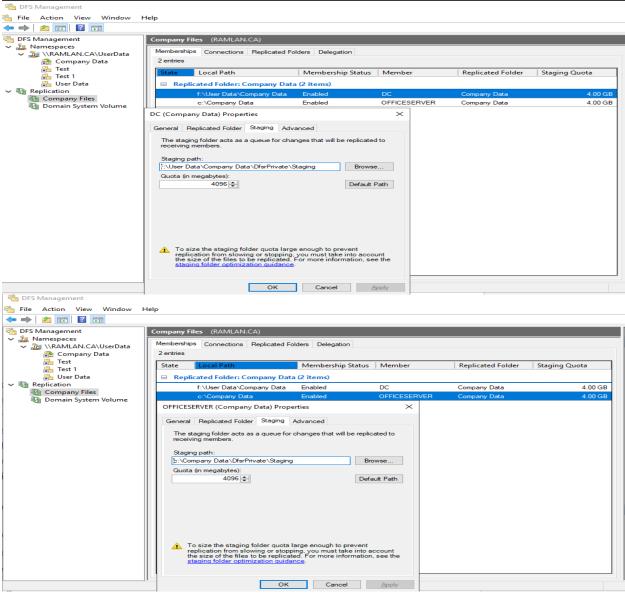
#### **DFSR Replication Schedule:**



#### **CONFIGURE STAGING:**

Reducing the schedule or reducing the bandwidth of a replication connection can also have the effect of having two people perhaps make changes on a file before that file can be replicated and before one's changes can be replicated to the other. Well, very large files also have a similar situation because just the amount of time required to get the file transferred from one location to the other can be longer than the amount of time between when the original file was changed and some other user attempts to make a change in the target location and so for that purpose, here with DFSR, there is also a staging location that's created for files that exceed a certain size.

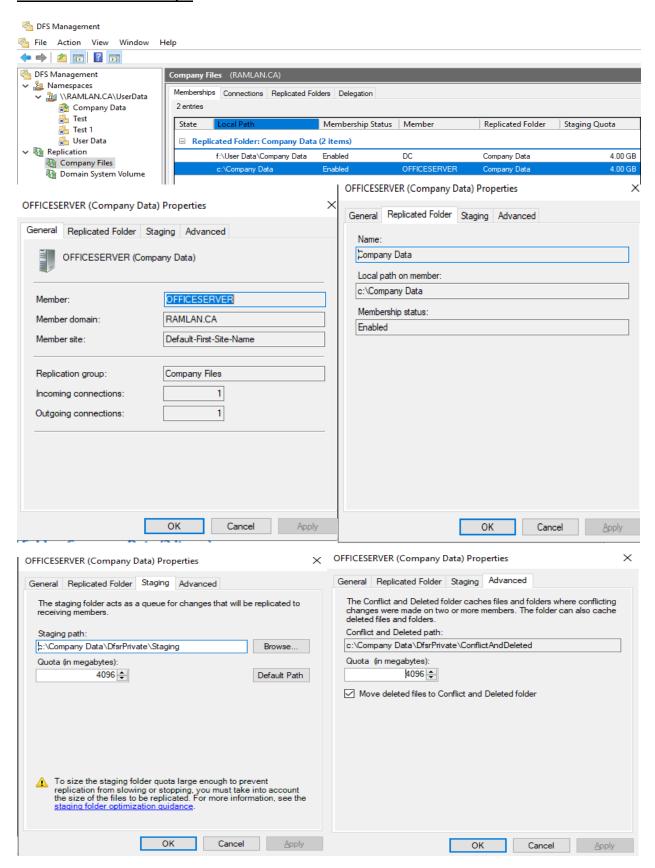
If we take a look at either of the two servers that are participating in this replication connection, if I right click on one of them and choose properties



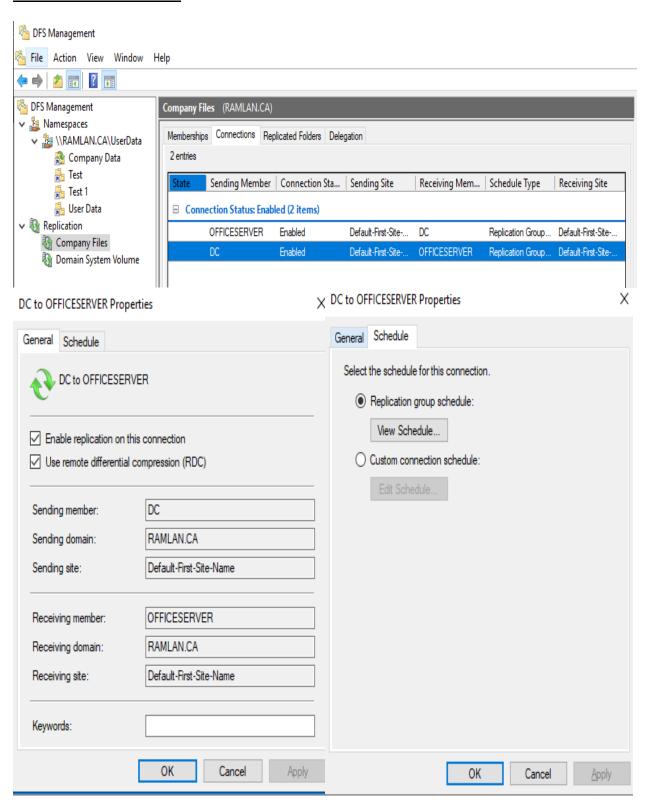
Here in C:\Company Data, the DFS private location and staging is a separate folder where files are transferred to. These files are transferred to this location to be staged before their transfer to another location. The use of this staging folder enables us to have a bit of a queue for these changes to occur so they're replicated to the other location, the target location without worrying about there being any modifications or changes by users during the process of a transfer. You can change to staging path. You can also change what the quota would be for the file size to be used for staging.

#### WHAT EACH TAB LOOKS:

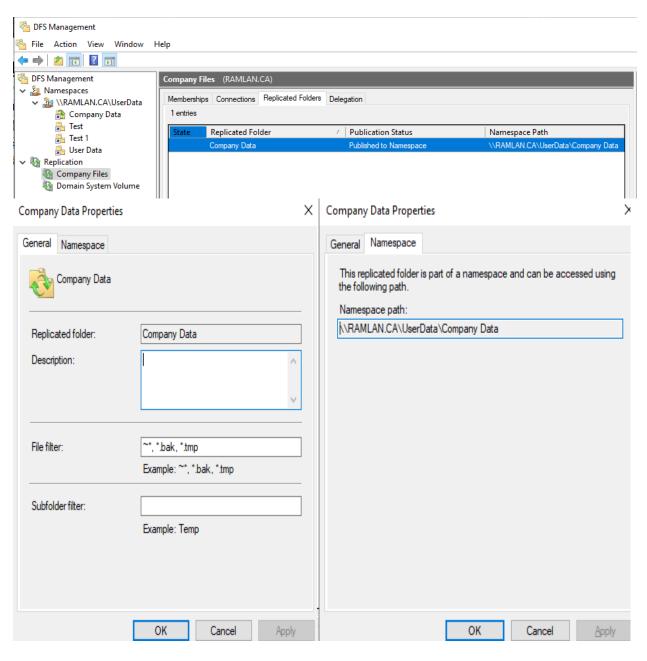
#### **REPLICATION: Memberships:**



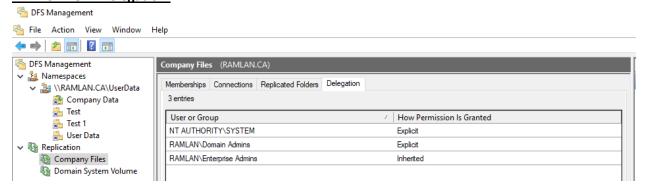
## **REPLICATION: Connections:**

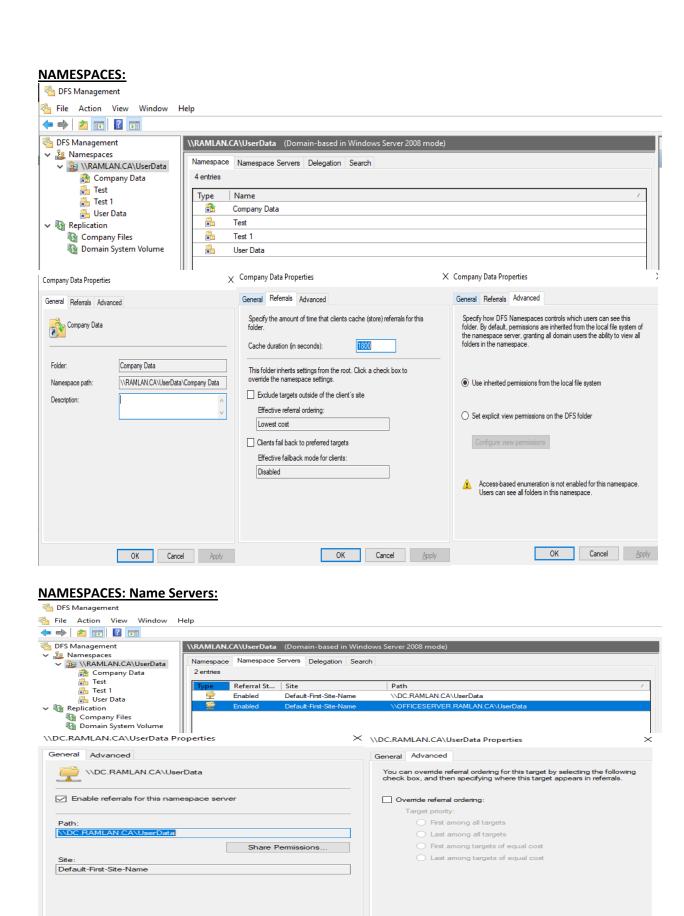


## **REPLICATION: Replicated Folders:**



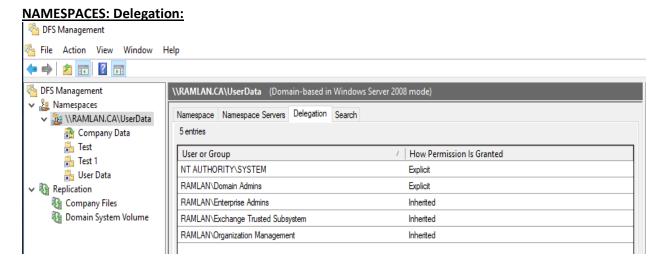
## **REPLICATION: Delegation:**





OK Cancel Apply

OK Cancel Apply



#### **DFS / R TROUBLESHOOTING:**

So we've gone through and we've set up DFS and DFS Replication. Hopefully by now you can see that it's reasonably straightforward once you get your head around the various constructs and approaches for doing it. But happens when things go wrong? The last thing we need to check is how we can troubleshoot DFS and DFS Replication.

We'll start off by looking at a tool called DFSDiag, and then we'll look at another tool we can use to troubleshoot called DFSUtil.

Open PowerShell as admin and type in DFSDIAG /? to see the options. Here we can see we've got various checks that we can do. So we can test the domain controllers, the sites, the DFS config, integrity, etc.,

```
Administrator: Windows PowerShell
PS C:\Users\Administrator> dfsdiag /?
----- Commands supported -----
/TestDCs
                                  Checks domain controller configuration.
                                  Checks site associations.
/TestSites
/TestDFSConfig
                                  Checks DFS Namespace configuration.
/TestDFSIntegrity
                                  Checks DFS Namespace integrity.
/TestReferral
                                  Checks referral responses.
/?
                                  Displays this help.
Use the /? parameter after any command to display help for the command.
PS C:\Users\Administrator>
```

```
Administrator: Windows PowerShell
                                                                                                                                                                                                       starting TestDcs...
Validating the DFS Namespace service...
Validating DFS Namespace service on DC.
Success: The DFS Namespace service on the following server is started and set to start automatically: DC
Validating SiteCostedReferrals Key...
Validating site costed referrals in DC.
Success: Site costing is enabled on SYSVOL/NETLOGON referrals.
Validating registry entries...
The following domain has a single domain controller: ramlan.ca
Validating site associations...
Validating the site associations on every domain controller of the following: DC
Success: The site associated with the following host name is consistent on all accessible domain controllers: DC
Finished TestDcs.
Starting TestSites...
Validating site associations...
Validating the site associations on every domain controller of the following: DC
STATE SITE ASSOCIATED WITH THE FOLLOWING HOST NAME IS CONSISTENT ON All ACCESSIBLE DOMAIN CONTROLLERS: DC
Finished TestSites.
Validating the following domain in the domain cache: ramlan.ca
Success: Information for the following domain in the domain cache is OK: ramlan.ca
Starting TestSites...
Validating the site associations on every domain controller of the following: DC.RAMLAN.CA
Success: The site associated with the following host name is consistent on all accessible domain controllers: DC.RAMLAN
 Validating the site associations on every domain controller of the following: OFFICESERVER.RAMLAN.CA 
Success: The site associated with the following host name is consistent on all accessible domain controllers: OFFICESERV
R.RAMLAN.CA 
'Inished TestSites.
Starting TestDfsConfig...
Retrieving all the namespace servers...
Validating the DFS Namespace service...
Validating DFS Namespace service on DC.RAMLAN.CA.
varidating bes Namespace service on the following server is started and set to start automatically: DC.RAMLAN.CA
Success: The DFS Namespace service on OFFICESERVER.RAMLAN.CA.
Validating DFS Namespace service on the following server is started and set to start automatically: OFFICESERVER.RAMLA
Validating registry entries...
Comparing DC.RAMLAN.CA - OFFICESERVER.RAMLAN.CA.
Success: The registry values under HKLM\CCS\Services\Dfs\Parameters are consistent on all compared servers.
Finished TestDfsConfig.
Starting TestDfsIntegrity...
Validating the DFS metadata integrity of \\RAMLAN\UserData...
Checking for DFS metadata consistency between domain controllers and the PDC emulator in the domain...
Success: DFS metadata is consistent across all accessible domain controllers and the PDC emulator.
Checking the registry of the namespace servers...
Success: Registry information on namespace servers is consistent with the metadata in Active Directory Domain Services.
 alidating reparse points of all DFS folders in namespace: \\RAMLAN\UserData/
Checking for duplicate and overlapping folders (links) in namespace \\RAMLAN\UserData
Duplicate and overlapping folders (links) test completed.
Finished TestDfsIntegrity.
```

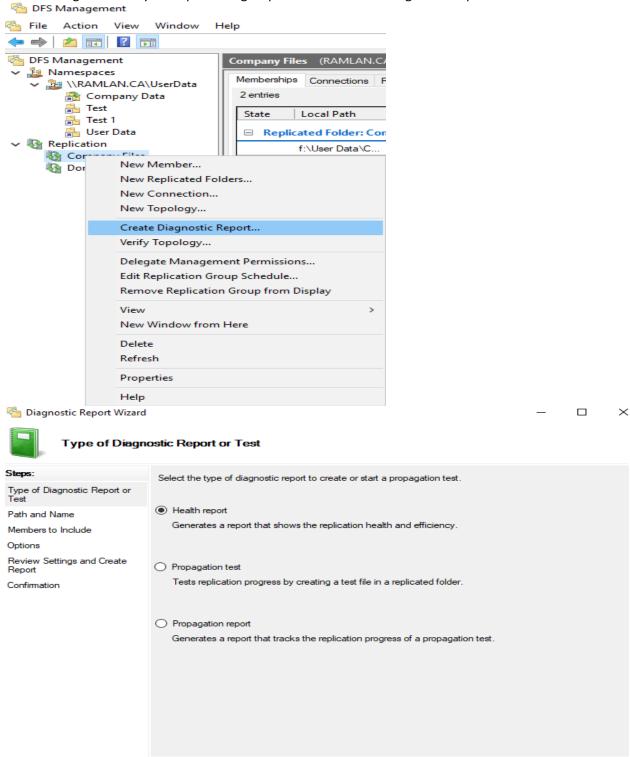
#### dfsutil root \\ramlan.ca\userdata

```
| State | Continue | C
```

#### **TROUBLESHOOTING REPLICATION:**

There's a number of tools and utilities that we can use, but we're going to start by looking at the diagnostic reports that you can generate from within the DFS Management console.

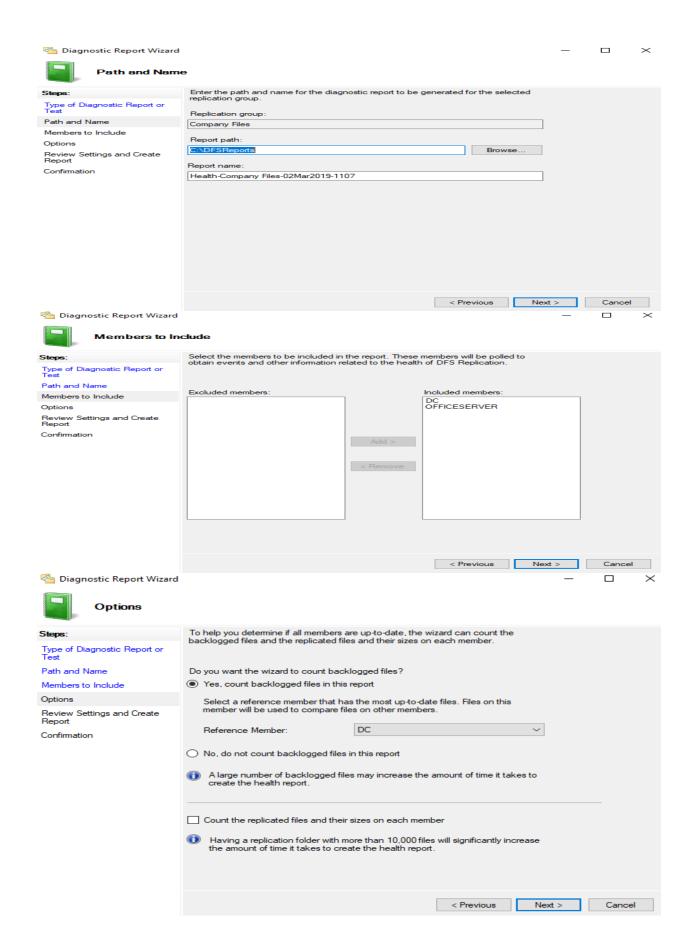
Let's start with running Diagnostic Reports. Open DFS Management Console —> Expand the replication node and right click on your replication group and select Create Diagnostic Report



< Previous

Next >

Cancel





Data collected on: 3/2/2019 at 11:10:57 AM (GMT-5:00)

Replication Group: Company Files (RAMLAN.CA)

Reference member:

Server scope: Selected 2 of 2 servers

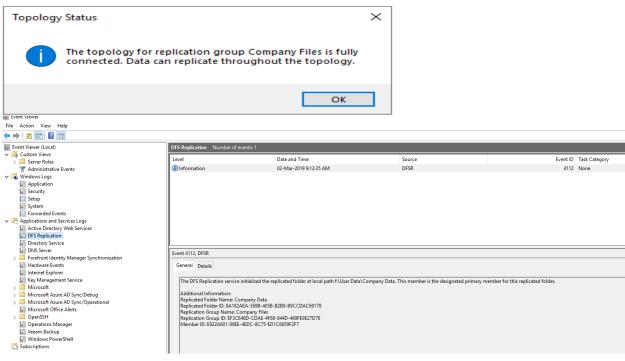
DFS Replication bandwidth savings: 9.44% reduction (2.21 MB replicated instead of 2.44 MB)

Server health: Server with DFS Replication errors (0)

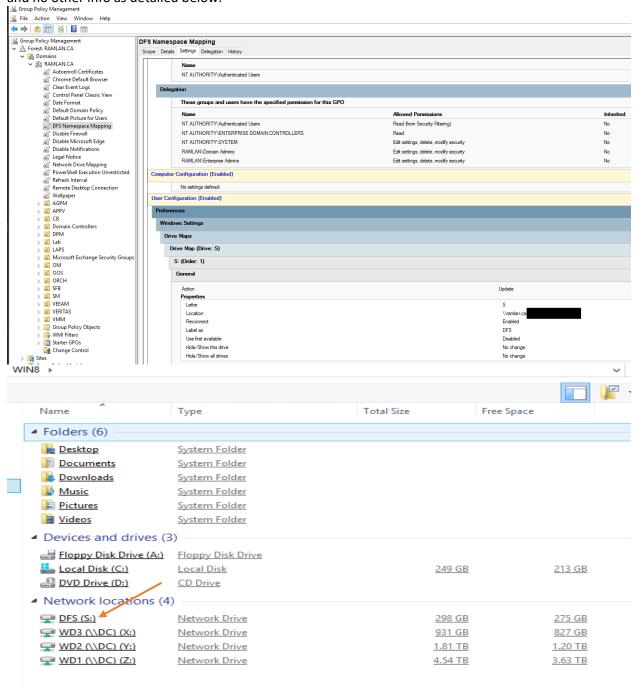
Servers with DFS Replication warnings (0)

# DFS Replication Propagation Report

Propagation tests with errors (0)



We just have to create a GPO so the DFS drive mapping will do its work and users will see just DFS name and no other info as detailed below.



So, we have completed all the configuration required for DFS setup.

**Thanks** 

Ram Lan 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar 2019